

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the
old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

Vol. 49, No. 2

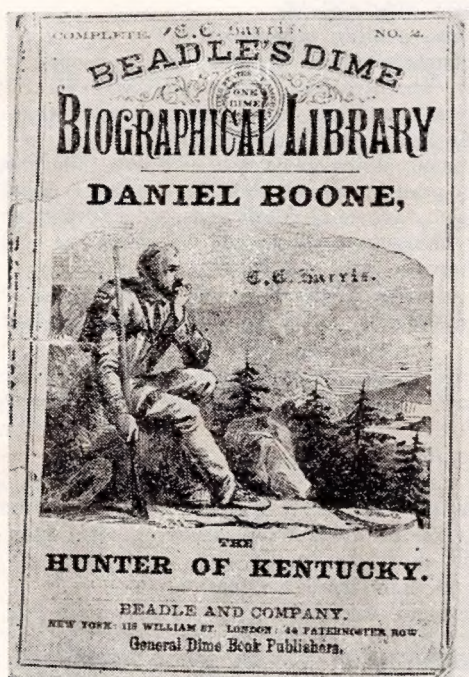
April 1980

Whole No. 542

A Time Of Lively Fiction

By Robert Sampson

CHAPTER III



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 214

BEADLES DIME BIOGRAPHICAL LIBRARY

Publisher: Beadle & Co., 141 William St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 15.
Dates: Dec. 20, 1860 to 1865. Schedule: The first 11 were issued monthly,
the remaining 4 intermittently. Size: 6½x4½". Pages: 100. Price: 10c.
Illustrations: Early editions had no illustration, later editions had portrait of
subject on cover. Contents: See list elsewhere in this issue.

A Time Of Lively Fiction

By Robert Sampson

CHAPTER III

Through the 1920's magazines move increasing numbers of series characters, an extraordinary crew, richly idiosyncratic. As a group, these characters have barely been examined. They wait patiently for rediscovery in the old magazines.

Peter the Brazen, Madame Storey, Janie Frete, Charlie Fenwick—**ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY**.

The Interstellar Patrol, Jules de Grandin—**WEIRD TALES**.

Race Williams, the Continental Op, Capt. MacBride, Black Burton — **BLACK MASK**.

White Wolf, Sheriff Bob and Danny—**COMPLETE STORIES**.

Taine—**AMAZING STORIES**.

The Major, Black John, Corporal Downey, Jimmy Lavender — **SHORT STORIES**.

The Crimson Clown, Boston Betty, Mr. Chang, The Picaroon, John Doe, Blue Jean Billy, Big Scar, The Thunderbolt, The Man in Purple, Balbane — **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**.

And others. The shining others.

While series characters were popular, they appeared at well scattered intervals and in low concentrations. Even **DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE**, that bastion of series characters, rarely devoted more than 20 per cent of an issue to them. The figure was usually less.

Nor did the usual series character continue indefinitely. Typical were five to seven story groups, after which the character melted weirdly into the sands. Perhaps reader response might generate a further series—even a novel. Beyond that, few characters continued. Of them all, only **BLUE BOOK'S** Diplomatic Free-Lances series appeared monthly through the generations.

An informed guess suggests that, from 1904 to about 1926, perhaps 200 groups of stories appeared. Each featured a single character. Most featured him briefly.

Considered in the mass, however, so many separate series provide a matrix upon which is impressed, like fossil ferns, the shape of story types interesting to the period. Within the ever familiar categories of mystery, adventure, love, humor, numerous sub-species rose and fell.

As you know, some subjects green and wither swiftly. For there are fads in popular fiction as in popular music. Across the years, reader interest flared momentarily for all sorts of specialized stuff. Such as

—railroad stories

—vaudeville and silent movie troupes

—humorous baseball teams

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- soldiers of fortune
- excursions to lost civilizations
- small town politics
- diplomacy
- western miners
- rapacious blond gold-diggers

Few survived. Most vanished as rapidly as last year's cause, and when

the fad was done, the series melted without trace.

More vigorous lines flowered across the generations. As, for instance, the detective story.

As the 1920's opened, the detective story boiled up to a major popular form. Already it had created such popular categories as the husband and wife detective team (The Honeymoon Detectives), the magician detective (Bal-bane), the scientific detective (Luther Trant), the young woman detective (Judith Lee). Occult detectives had come and almost gone. Eccentric geniuses paced everywhere. Equally eccentric private detectives, heavily embossed with the crest of Holmes, saved the police from humiliating failure. A few professional policemen also appeared—some ludicrous (Hopper, Initiating Noggins); others, like Brady and Riordan, ringing like new silver.

Most of these special forms would further expand during the 1920's. Surprisingly, the scientific detective attenuated to extinction; even Hugo Gernsback's attempt to revive the corpse with the publication of SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY (1929) only set the headstone more firmly.

A major innovation was the creation of the hard-boiled detective story, BLACK MASK's contribution to American letters. The seed was planted with a Race Williams story in 1922, after the magazine had ground out two years of banal fiction. By 1926, and a new editor, the classical BLACK MASK story was in being. It was conscious art. It featured economical scenes, brittle with understated emotion, using images as bright as crystal splinters. It presented contemporary stories and contemporary violence, written with determined cynicism. The gangsters and police were shaped from emotional hickory. Self-interest was shown as a virtue. Disbelief superseded sentimentality. Down within the polished glass of the stories trembled a romantic core, coldly contemptuous of its own generous impulses. But this was not evident for a long time.

As the hard-boiled story rose to its peak, the number of pulp detective fiction magazines sharply increased. DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE was the prime vehicle until BLACK MASK (1920) and DETECTIVE TALES (1923). FLYNN'S appeared in 1924, stuffed full of English fiction by English writers; then, in 1927, it became FLYNN'S WEEKLY DETECTIVE FICTION and aspired toward the BLACK MASK sound. By then CLUES had appeared, followed by THE DRAGNET, CRIME MYSTERIES, STARTLING DETECTIVE ADVENTURES, and the reprint BEST DETECTIVE MYSTERIES.

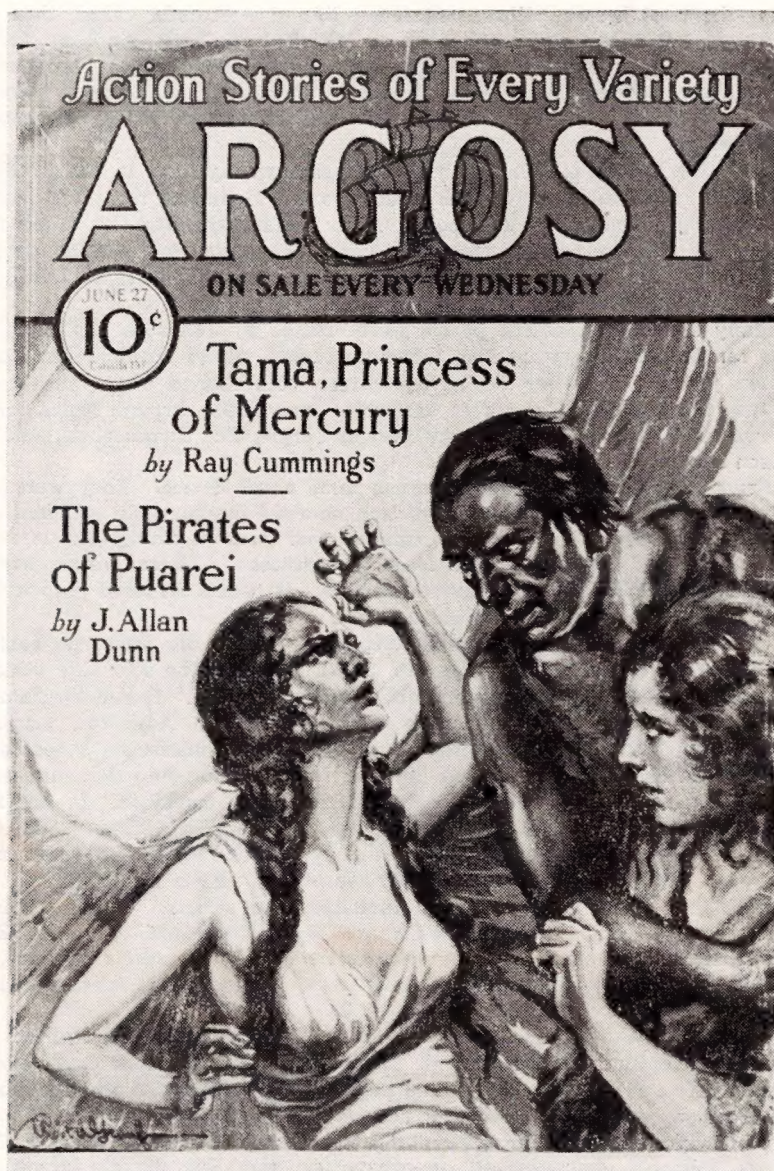
All announcing the 1930's flood of titles.

While evolution gripped the detective story, other story forms enjoyed hot popularity. One of these, the crime story, reached maximum popularity during the 1920's. It had begun several generations back.

Successful literary types diversify. The crime story did precisely that. The pulp magazines seized upon each different story form and adapted these—by reprint, if necessary; by imitation if possible. Thus early crime stories were heavy with artistic thieves and cracksmen, echoing the Raffles and Arsene Lupin themes. They were supplemented by borrowings from sources as various as Jesse James and Dr. Fu-Manchu. Each figure was represented, at least generally, by lines of derivative figures in DETECTIVE STORY, PEOPLE'S, the early BLACK MASK, and FLYNN'S.

Emperors of crime rose, directing their dishonest legions (Black Star, Rafferty). Lone wolf outlaws preyed on society, on other criminals, on dishonest white-collar elements (Blue Jean Billy, Mr. Chang, the Crimson Clown).

Ever more stories were written to prove that crime, if exciting, paid



poorly. Some heroes were cute (Thubway Tham). Other's practiced the confidence game (Clackworthy), or simple rough stuff (Big-Nose Charlie), or murdered when annoyed (The Ringer). In some few cases, the criminal hero was treated as a madcap buccaneer, whose victims, themselves, were criminals and richly deserved robbing. Such Robin Hoods appeared under various names and degrees of charm, from The Saint to Lester Leithe to Edgar Wallace's The Brigand; all were supremely successful.

The most successful group, however, was that of the repentant criminal

heroes—the bent heroes. These entered a life of successful crime, then (as was usual) fell in love and gave it all up (Cleek, Lone Wolf, Anthony Trent). Or they took up thieving to ease their boredom (Jimmie Dale) or because society had done them wrong (The Picaroon). Whatever the reason, they all spent years living down their youthful follies and accumulating long strings of adventures.

Some few turned to crime only to redress a wrong done to them. For a brief period, they raised havoc with those who had victimized them, and dazzled the defending police, the pitiful dears. After milking the situation to the final squeal, they then retired to blameless lives. Thus, in concentrated extract, the stories of The Avenging Twins, Four-Square Jane, The Night Wind, The Thunderbolt, and Pat the Piper.

Many bent heroes of the period were created by Johnston McCulley. His tastes ran to dashing young men, often costumed, whose criminal adventures uplifted justice. McCulley began his career with stories about the master criminal, Black Star. Thereafter, he wrote inexorably through the sagas of such costumed players as Zorro, the Man in Purple, The Thunderbolt, and The Crimson Clown.

Prior to McCulley, costumes were a dime novel device. They were generally modified Klu Klux Klan robes and adorned innumerable criminal syndicates. After McCulley, magazine villains could wear anything—hoods or octopus suits—and feel not in the least embarrassed. Almost single handed, McCulley made the costume story respectable. It took a hundred pulp writers about ten years to make it ridiculous again.

Criminal heroes and hard-boiled detectives aside, the scientific romance captured a disproportionate number of 1920's hearts. The scientific romance was distinguished by being non-scientific and unromantic. It had the familiar history—dime novel roots, European development, and American magazine exploitation. Those early masters, Verne and Wells, contributed a neat stock of novels, concerning moon flights, Martian invasion, invisible men, unchecked growth, monster making, submarine travels, and time machines. In one form or another, most of these ideas entered the Munsey publications. The early ALL-STORY carried heavy doses of such early science-fiction—more accurately fantasy, as few effects had a laboratory connection. Even into the mid-1920's ARGOSY ALL-STORY proudly ran invisible man serials. WEIRD TALES ran a respectable amount of science-fiction. By the time AMAZING STORIES got published, vast amounts of material existed. Called scientific romance, scientifiction, interplanetary romance, or whatnot, it was science fantasy and unrepentant about it.

Edgar Rice Burroughs contributed heavily to this field. His subject was romantic adventure set far enough away that errors in fact could not be checked. He specialized in sword and peril stories. These were set on planets that never were. Readers were not noticeably disturbed.

Burroughs began on Mars, went into the earth, then out to Venus. Other writers followed, industriously re-excavating the Burroughs' furrows—on Venus, the Radio Planet (Ralph Milne Farley); on Mars, the Planet of Peril (O. A. Kline); on Mercury, full of winged maidens (Ray Cummings); and down into the universes of the atom (Mr. Cummings, repeatedly).

Wherever the heroes went, they found blood and battle, and ominous biology. All through the 1920's issues of ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY, these stories flickered in counterpoint to the endless adventures of Tarzan. The sword and peril stories, numbed by a great sameness, slowly petered out. The Tarzan theme remained fresh enough to generate crass copies during the 1930's.

The interplanetary romance formally mutated to space opera in Edmond Hamilton's 1928 stories (WEIRD TALES) about the Interstellar Patrol. Creepy aliens menaced. Spaceships appeared, their performance improbable. Vast fleets hurled rays and defied physics, blasting mightily on galactic fringes. E. E. Smith followed with his Skylark series in AMAZING and ASTOUNDING. The theme of interstellar battle, seasoned by alien cultures and scientific heroes, spread unchecked. It became a staple of 1930's science fiction. It appeared side by side with Gernsback's more didactic efforts to teach science and morality through his magazines—AMAZING STORIES, SCIENCE WONDER STORIES, WONDER STORIES, and on into 1930 deeps.

More conventional adventures developed in the general magazines of the period: ADVENTURE, BLUE BOOK, SHORT STORIES, COMPLETE STORIES, and ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

At the beginning of the 1920's, a burst of superior historical fiction appeared, written by Harold Lamb (the Khlit series) and Talbot Mundy (the Tros series), both in ADVENTURE. Readers unmoved by the excellence of these fictions could indulge themselves with tales of distant adventure. The more distant, the better. Regardless of setting, they all bore a certain family resemblance—the somewhat tarnished hero struggled for riches against the plotting of a villain, characterized in shades of black: the stories ended in a rain of bodies.

Certain of these epics were sited in India (Secret Service Smith) or the South Seas (Hurricane Williams) or among the sweaty tough guys of the Foreign Legion. The Old West was particularly popular, and innumerable gun-slicks rode those trails first blazed by Hopalong Cassidy. Each enjoyed his own specialty. One wandered cheerfully, a combination range detective and good-deed-doer (Hashknife); another was an outlaw, fighting for justice in spite of his reputation (White Wolf).

No sooner did each of these figures prove successful, than from them, like the tail of a comet, flowed a stream of similar characters. Similar, not identical. Variation was the rule.

Beginning in 1926, the pulps discovered that fine new subject, war. Correctly, they discovered it following the massive success of "What Price Glory," which opened on Broadway in the Fall of 1924. The play was bawdy, colloquial, tough-spirited. It brimmed with that same sardonic sentimentality, disguised as unsentimental toughness, that brightened BLACK MASK and ADVENTURE fiction.

These qualities did not quite make it into pulp war fiction. This remained firmly chained to the legend of the individual hero, who casually violated orders and exhaled an air of disrespect sufficient to earn him a firing squad, given actual combat conditions.

In the pulps, however, if not in actual combat, the individual reigned supreme. How he glittered, ragged, dirty, wonderful, through WAR STORIES (1926), BATTLE STORIES (1927), WAR NOVELS (1928). If few of the authors had enjoyed trench warfare, most had enjoyed "What Price Glory." So the legend progressed.

Almost at once, the air war pulp magazine appeared and spread, like viral flu, among the magazines. WINGS and AIR STORIES (1927), WAR BIRDS, SKY BIRDS, and AIR TRAILS (1928), ZEPPELIN STORIES (1929), and so into 1930, throwing out ever more titles and entering the single-character field (G-8, Dusty Ayers, Bill Barnes).

More than all the other magazines, the air war pulps concentrated on the individual hero. One brave man flew his Spad against the sinister Fokkers.

Few other aircraft types appeared, since most authors remained blissfully uninformed about the realities of aircraft types and performance and what aerial combat had really been like. They were no less uninformed than their readers. And so, perfect satisfaction was achieved by all.

The air war pulps are beautiful examples of the 1920's pulp fiction. Concentrated excitement. Heroes of impeccable individualism, achieving through carefully detailed adventures which made only the feeblest connections with reality.

How stylish these fictions are. How brightly drawn. They are impossibilities on the grand scale, growing steadily grander. While the heroes of these stories, once merely extraordinary men, became by the same character inflation, increasingly like earth-bound gods, supra-human and astounding.

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1. The Life of Joseph Garibaldi, the Liberator of Italy, by Orville J. Victor, Dec. 20, 1860.
2. The Life and Times of Colonel Daniel Boone, the Hunter of Kentucky, by Edward S. Ellis, Jan. 22, 1861.
3. The Life and Times of Christopher Carson, the Rocky Mountain Scout and Guide, with the Reminiscences of Fremont's Exploring Expedition and Notes on Life in New Mexico, by Edward S. Ellis. Feb. 22, 1861.
4. The Life and Services of General Anthony Wayne (Mad Anthony), the Revolutionary Patriot and Indian Conqueror, by Orville J. Victor. March 22, 1861.
5. The Life and Adventures of Colonel Davy Crockett, by Edward S. Ellis. April 22, 1861.
6. The Life and Military and Civic Services of Lieut. Gen. Winfield Scott, by Orville J. Victor. May 22, 1861.
7. Pontiac, the Conspirator (Chief of the Ottawas) and the Siege of Detroit, by Edward S. Ellis. June 22, 1861.
8. The Life of Maj.-Gen. John C. Fremont, the American Pathfinder, by Lieut. James Magoon. July 22, 1861.
9. The Life and Exploits of John Paul Jones, Chevalier and Rear-Admiral, by Orville J. Victor. Aug. 22, 1861.
10. The Life and Services of Major General, the Marquis de Lafayette, by E. P. H. (E. P. Hollister). Sept. 22, 1861.
11. Life of Tecumseh, the Shawnee Chief, by Edward S. Ellis. Oct. 22, 1861.
12. The Life of Maj-Gen. George B. McClennan, General-in-Chief, U.S.A., by Orville J. Victor. Mar. 17, 1862
13. Parson Brownlow, and the Unionists of East Tennessee with a Sketch of His Life, Anonymous. March 24, 1862.
14. The Private and Public Life of Abraham Lincoln, by Orville J. Victor. Oct. 22, 1864.
15. The Life of Ulysses Sydney Grant, Lieutenant-General U.S.A., by Edward Willett. 1865.

NOTES

Jack Bales wishes to express his appreciation to John Cannon, Dick Schreul, Beth Bales and James G. Bales for the photos made available for use with his article on Charles Pierce Burton.

Mr. R. B. Hudson of P. O. Box 379, Dallas, Georgia is interested in obtaining a copy of Frank Merriwell's Chums, any edition.

EVIDENCE OF ANOTHER EDWARD STRATEMEYER PSEUDONYM

By Peter C. Walther

For Jack Dizer—with justifiable emulation

Some time ago I stumbled upon an interesting fact which I think will shed some light on one of Edward Stratemeyer's heretofore unproven pen names.¹ Although my proof is not totally substantiated I still feel that there is a strong case for my assertions and will support my claims by citing external as well as internal evidence whenever possible.

While in an old bookstore last December I purchased the Mershon copy of *The Golden Cañon* by G. A. Henty. A cursory inspection revealed the fact that the story was a novella as two further tales were appended to it in order to fill out the volume: *The Stone Chest* and *On to Cuba*, no author cited. On the bottom of the first textual page of *The Stone Chest* appeared "Copyrighted 1896, by the Bright Days Pub. Co." After scurrying to the Hamilton College Library and then examining my xerox copies of *Bright Days* I assembled the following case for what I feel to be genuine Stratemeyer authorship:

The Library of Congress has holdings of *The Golden Cañon* under the following publishers' imprints: Geo. M. Hill, M. A. Donohue, Hurst, Mershon, New York Publishing, Independence Co., and Street and Smith.² The only indication that there was more material in the book besides the Henty piece was the Donohue issue which included "The Stone Chest" and "The Solid Muldoon," no mention anywhere of "On to Cuba." Besides my personal Mershon copy, the only other available edition for examination was a Donohue printing which included just "The Stone Chest" as well as the Henty story. Therefore there must have been at least two Donohue reprints. So my *The Golden Cañon* appears to be the only edition that included "On to Cuba" between hard covers. Right? Wrong?

The pagination of the volume presents an interesting discrepancy:

"The Golden Canon" — 1-121

"The Stone Chest" — 125-223

"On to Cuba" — 137-209

Obviously this is not consistent. What apparently happened was that when the book was ready to go to press the printers realized that the work was still too slim,³ so they quickly inserted "On to Cuba." It must have been lifted bodily from some previous volume which had already been on the market (or at the very least ready for distribution) since the type setters did not even bother to alter the pagination which should have been pp. 227-299.⁴

"The Stone Chest, or, The Secret of Cedar Island" by Ralph Harrington first appeared in issues 7-12 of "Bright Days:" Sept. 12-Oct. 17, 1896, as did "On to Cuba; or, Nellie and Nat Denham in Search of Their Father," also by Ralph Harrington, in issues 14-18, Oct. 31-Nov. 28, 1896. I contend that Ralph Harrington was indeed none other than Edward Stratemeyer and submit the following proof:

Point 1: Although Stratemeyer wrote many pot-boilers during the 1890's which do not read like the later Winfield and Bonehills, still there are unmistakable Stratemeyer trademarks in both stories in question: the usual "conversational" openers to his books as well as his distinguishable names for certain people and places (the "Svlachkys" which hold Mr. Cromwell prisoner in "The Stone Chest," for example.) This contention may not be a deciding factor but one has to have read a lot of Stratemeyer to understand the point intended. It has a decided individualistic ring.

Point 2: "The Stone Chest" and "On To Cuba" are the only serials in

Bright Days which appear under the Harrington byline. It seems interesting that both these stories are bound together in one volume, although this does not conclusively prove Stratemeyer authorship either.

Point 3: P. 32 of issue #8 of **Bright Days** dated September 19, 1896 states "Among those who will WRITE EXCLUSIVELY FOR BRIGHT DAYS will be Edward Stratemeyer, Albert Lee Ford, Arthur M. Winfield, Roy Rockwood, T. Barnum, Capt. Ralph Bonehill, Ralph Harrington, D. T. Henty, Clara A. Perry, Philip A. Alyer, and Alfred Armage." Excluding Perry and Armage who wrote only short stories for the periodical all the other serials appearing under these pseudonyms have been proven to be by Stratemeyer⁵ with the exception of Ralph Harrington. Furthermore all these authors (including Harrington) had at least one lead serial to his credit in **Bright Days**. Why would Stratemeyer include "Ralph Harrington" among material penned by himself?

Point 5: Stratemeyer is known to have used the name "Ralph Hamilton" at least four times before in **Golden Days** between 1890-1895. Possibly "Ralph Harrington" was intended as a subtle connection.⁶

Point 5: By 1899, the date of my **Golden Cañon** volume, Mershon was certainly one of Stratemeyer's chief publishers. As one connects Optic with Lee and Shepard, Castlemon with Porter and Coates, and Alger with A. K. Loring, so the name Mershon conjures up Winfield and Bonehill immediately. Along with Lee and Shepard they published much Stratemeyer-Bonehill-Winfield and related material. If Mershon intended to fill out a volume of a work by an author with as large a juvenile following as G. A. Henty, then they would have chosen to print something anonymously and capitalize on Henty's current popularity. What more logical decision than to tap the resources of one of their most dependable and best-selling juvenile authors? (Indeed, Mershon was also publishing other **Bright Days** serials of Stratemeyer: **The Land of Fire** by Louis Charles, **The Young Florists of Spring Hill** by Albert Lee Ford, and **For Name and Fame** by Allen Chapman.) The book could therefore appear to be 100% Henty, Stratemeyer receives remuneration, and Mershon reaps the rewards of a brisk sale.

* * *

Ultimately the proof is in the pudding. Hopefully as copies of **The Golden Cañon** disappear from book stores' shelves the reader will have the opportunity of deciding for himself whether or not the two "Ralph Harrington" stories are indeed by Edward Stratemeyer. If at some future date both are proven infallibly to be so, then they reflect yet another facet of Stratemeyer's versatility and creativity.

Footnotes

1. "The stories (in **Bright Days**) were good, however, as Edward Stratemeyer was the author of nearly all of them." Capt. C. G. Mayo, **Bibliographic Listing of Bright Days** (Fall River, Mass.: Edward T. LeBlanc, 1962), p. 4.
2. **National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints.**
3. Although a superficial comparison revealed the Donohue volume to be thicker, the Mershon edition offered more reading matter. Donohue's 223 pages utilized thicker paper, and a cheaper binding, thereby appearing heftier. In actuality the Mershon volume was 299 pages while using finer paper. Here we have the soundest example of the maxim: "Don't judge a book by its cover."
4. Mershon published **Malcolm the Waterboy** by D. T. Henty in 1900, comprising 209 pages. Possibly "On To Cuba" was lifted from this book. See **National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprints.**

5. John T. Dizer, Jr., "Serials and Boys Books by Edward Stratemeyer," *Dime Novel Round-Up*, 44 (1975), 126-148. D. T. Henty as Stratemeyer seems unassailable at this point.
6. *ibid.*, p. 129.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES—DIME NOVELS, BOYS BOOKS

A TREASURY OF NOSTALGIC COLLECTIBLES, by Charles J. Jordan. Yankee Books, Depot Square, Peterborough, N. H. 03458. \$10.95. Stiff paper covers. This is an excellent publication and it is heartily endorsed. There is a section devoted to the collecting of boys series books.

A TOUCH OF ROMANCE, WESTERN PULP ILLUSTRATORS, by Mary Carroll Nelson. Article appearing in NEW MEXICO MAGAZINE, February 1980 issue. \$1.50. Bataan Memorial Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503. Nicely illustrated article on the western pulp illustrators of the 1930's and 40's. Although the article does not go in depth, it makes a good start for further study. (Article sent in by B. K. Goree)

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Stratemeyer, Edward. "Shorthand Tom, the Reporter or the Exploits of a Bright Boy." W. L. Allison Co., 1897. Or in dime novels.

ANYTHING pertaining to Tom Swift. I am working on a Richter Fellowship project to investigate the influence of the Tom Swift series; therefore, I am looking for ANY and ALL evidence of this influence:—books, articles, personal experiences, etc., that either directly concern the series or merely refer to it, perhaps to describe some type of scientific achievement. I am also interested in such associated subjects as the Tom Swift movie and TV projects and the Tom Swiftie puns. I would like to correspond with anyone who is interested in this and can help me in any way.

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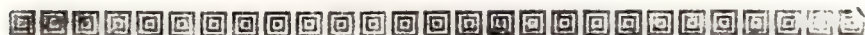
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